

Many State school chiefs and district superintendents have recently made a commitment to this effort. My legislation will make available much-needed Federal support.

□ 1015

The focus in the classroom should be on the student. This bill will help States improve their assessments and make better use of the results, so they can draw valuable conclusions about students and give educators the data they need, so they can do what they do best: teach.

Ultimately, we must address the culture of testing that has created stress for students, parents, and teachers. This bill is a strong first step. It keeps control in the hands of the States and school districts, and it provides the funding to streamline assessment systems and make sure that the remaining assessments are high quality and useful.

My bill offers this support through an existing funding stream, and it will help put the focus back on our students. I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

#### OPPOSITION TO UNESCO FUNDING

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) for 5 minutes.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak against a push by the administration and its allies here in Congress to ignore U.S. law—this time, to ignore the legal prohibition on using U.S. taxpayer dollars to fund UNESCO.

Frankly, it is an indictment against the administration and some of our colleagues that we have to go through this song and dance every year or whenever a funding measure is set to come to the floor; yet here we are again, as some in Congress want to help President Obama circumvent and undermine U.S. law and restore at least partial funding for UNESCO, so that that body can continue to push its anti-U.S./anti-Israel agenda.

Time and again, the President has taken unilateral action meant to get around congressional opposition and has openly stated that he will continue to do so.

Since 1990, U.S. law has prohibited any funding to the U.N. or to any U.N. agency that gives the PLO membership status and recognizes the nonexistent State of Palestine.

UNESCO was well aware of our laws when its members voted to include this so-called Palestine among its ranks, triggering the U.S. funding prohibition. President Obama knew this when we cut off UNESCO's funding in response because it is the law; however, since then, he has sought ways to undermine and circumvent this law to not only restore funding to UNESCO, but to also pay dues in arrears which now would amount to over \$300 million in U.S. taxpayer dollars.

This is the very same body that allows the likes of Cuba—the antithesis of freedom and the respect for human rights and the rule of law—on its executive board. When UNESCO admitted a nonexistent Palestine, it undermined the peace process and only emboldened Abu Mazen even further to move forward with his unilateral push for statehood at the U.N.

There cannot be a legitimate Palestinian state unless it comes about as the result of direct negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians. This unilateral scheme by Abu Mazen is a way for him to use that U.N. body to gain de facto statehood without having to first come to an agreement with Israel.

If President Obama and his enablers in Congress have their way and U.S. funding for UNESCO is restored, it will signal that the U.S. supports this unilateral push for statehood, and we will have sold out our closest friend and ally: the democratic Jewish State of Israel.

We must make it clear to the administration in no uncertain terms that Congress will not allow it to continue to circumvent and undermine congressional authority or the law and that we will not allow it once again to fund UNESCO.

Giving the administration the authority it seeks to fund UNESCO would not only set a dangerous precedent by showing those with an anti-Israel agenda at the U.N. that the U.S. does not have the courage of its convictions or the fortitude to enforce our own laws, but it would also give the green light to the rest of the bodies at the U.N. to follow UNESCO's lead and also admit Palestine.

Abu Mazen has already signaled that he will seek further recognition at the U.N., and unless we make it absolutely certain to the entire U.N. system that admitting Palestine has very real and tangible negative consequences, the bodies at the U.N. will fall in line with this dangerous scheme, and that would cause irreparable harm to the peace process.

Instead of President Obama's looking for ways to spend hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars at an anti-U.S./anti-Israel body at the U.N., which is in violation of U.S. law, the President should perhaps instead focus on institutions at the U.N. that do work and that are effective.

This month, for example, the World Food Programme, WFP, was forced to suspend its assistance to millions of refugees who fled the crisis in Syria and went to Jordan, to Lebanon, to Iraq, to Turkey; as a result, millions could go hungry as they are set to face the harsh winter.

Our money would be better spent helping an institution we know works because it relies on voluntary contributions only, and we should be doing more to ensure that the WFP, the World Food Programme, can continue its good work to assist these millions of refugees around the world.

#### THIS CONGRESS MUST VOTE TO AUTHORIZE THE WARS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MCGOVERN) for 5 minutes.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my great frustration and anger that this Congress—the 113th Congress—continues to ignore its constitutional responsibilities to debate and vote on whether to authorize the U.S. war against Islamic State forces in Iraq and Syria.

On July 25, this House voted 370–40 that, if the United States engages in sustained combat operations in Iraq, then the House would need to authorize such actions. Let me read exactly what this House approved by such an overwhelming, bipartisan majority:

The President shall not deploy or maintain United States Armed Forces in a sustained combat role in Iraq without specific statutory authorization for such use enacted after the date of the adoption of this concurrent resolution.

That vote, supported by 180 Republicans and 190 Democrats, was taken nearly 4.5 months ago.

What has happened since then? On August 8, just 2 weeks after the House vote, the U.S. began bombing Islamic State forces in Iraq. We are now bombing Iraq to protect infrastructure, as part of coordinated military operations with Kurdish and Iraqi military forces, and to take back or to hold cities, towns, and other territory. We are flying dozens of bombing sorties nearly every day in Iraq.

Mr. Speaker, we have also escalated the number of U.S. troops in Iraq, ostensibly as trainers and advisers. On November 7, the President announced yet another escalation in the number of U.S. troops deployed to Iraq, sending roughly an additional 1,500 troops to the region for a “comprehensive training effort” for Iraq's army.

When they arrive, this will put the number of American troops in Iraq at around 3,000. The U.S. Central Command is also working on setting up new “expeditionary advise-and-assist operation centers” far outside the cities of Baghdad and Erbil.

What else has happened since July? We expanded the war to Syria. On September 17, this House voted to include in the short-term continuing resolution authority to arm and train certain Syrian rebel forces, ostensibly to provide ground troops inside Syria to fight Islamic State forces.

Five days later, the U.S. began bombing inside Syria. We have flown scores of bombing missions inside Syrian territory against the Islamic State and—and this should come as no surprise—other radical groups like the Khorasan Group.

This week, we are in military negotiations with Turkey to establish a safe zone—a no-fly zone—along the northern border of Syria that will cover territory inside of Syria and inside Turkey.